

The Fallen Will Not be Forgotten



Virginia State Police Chaplain Senior Trooper Rex Carter, US Attorney Timothy Heaphy, US Marshal Gerald Holt, Tazewell County Sheriff Brian Hieatt, Tazewell County Commonwealth's Attorney Dennis Lee and US Congressman Morgan Griffith (R-VA) paid their respects at a fallen officer ceremony in Tazewell County last week.

Last Saturday evening, close to 100 citizens, law enforcement officers and their families and local public officials gathered in Tazewell County, Virginia to commemorate National Police Week by honoring those men and women who put their lives on the line every day in the name of justice and to remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Police Week is a national week of recognition for the service and sacrifice of law enforcement officers which pays special recognition to those who have lost their lives in the line of duty for the safety and protection of others.

This year, the names of 362 officers killed in the line of duty were added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, DC. These 362 officers include 162 officers killed during 2011, plus 199 officers who died in previous years but whose stories of sacrifice had been lost to history until now.

Four officers from the Western District of Virginia were added to the National Memorial in DC. this year. These included Deputy Samuel Arthur Funkhouser of the Shenandoah County Sheriff's Office, Deputies Cameron Neil Justus and William Ezra Stiltner of the Buchanan County Sheriff's Office and Officer Derek W. Crouse of the Virginia Tech Police Department.

Deputy Funkhouser was shot while responding to a domestic disturbance on December 27, 1926. He later died of his wounds on March 7, 1927. He was survived by his wife and three children.

Deputies Justus and Stiltner were both shot and killed while attempting to rescue two of their fellow deputies who were shot and wounded during an ambush incident. Deputy Stiltner is survived by his wife, two children and two grandchildren. Deputy Justus is survived by his wife, son and daughter. The suspect was later shot and killed by other responding officers.

Officer Crouse was shot and killed during a traffic stop by a disturbed person not involved in the incident. That subject later took his own life. Officer Crouse is survived by his wife, five children, mother and brother.

In Tazewell County on Saturday evening, United States Attorney Timothy J. Heaphy spoke about the sacrifice made by these fallen officers, their families and those still serving.

“The men and women who work in law enforcement put their lives on the line each and every day to protect us,” United States Attorney Timothy J. Heaphy said today. “We gather this week across the country to thank those who perform this indispensable service, as well as their families. We honor the memory of all who have made the ultimate sacrifice.”

The United States Attorney thanked the families of Deputy Reid and Deputy Hess for attending the event and reminded them the memory of their loved ones would not be forgotten.

“We thank you for your sacrifice and remind you that surviving family members of slain officers will always be part of the law enforcement family,” the U.S. Attorney added.

Tazewell County Sheriff Brian Hieatt was also on hand Saturday and presented a check to the family of slain Virginia Tech Officer Derek Crouse, who was killed in the line of duty in 2011. The donation was made possible because of a cookout sponsored by the Community Events Board.

Tragically, our nation has observed a shocking increase in felonious assaults of law enforcement officers. In 2009, officer deaths rose to an all-time high with a record 48 officers feloniously killed in the line of duty. That number increased by 32 percent in 2010.

To that end, the United States Department of Justice has made the safety of our nation’s law enforcement officers a top priority. In 2011, the Attorney General released the officer Safety Toolkit, designed to share resources with federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement leaders in an effort to promote officer safety.

Here in the Western District of Virginia, the United States Attorney’s Office organizes and participates in a variety of training events designed to increase officer safety and continue a dialogue between federal, state and local agencies.